

Department of State

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO): Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program

Announcement Type: New Cooperative Agreement

Funding Opportunity Number: ECA-ECAAS-16-009

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number: 19.011

Key Date/Application Deadline: March 14, 2016

Program Description/Executive Summary: The U.S. Study Abroad Branch within the Office of Global Educational Programs of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) announces an open competition to administer the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program. Public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3) may submit proposals for the purpose of administering a scholarship program for credit-bearing academic study or internships outside the United States by U.S. undergraduate students with demonstrated financial need (Pell Grant recipients). Applicants may submit only one proposal under this competition. If multiple proposals are received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared ineligible and receive no further consideration in the review process.

A. Program Description:

Overall grant making authority for this program is contained in the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, Public Law 87-256, as amended, also known as the Fulbright-Hays Act. The purpose of the Act is "to enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries...; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations...and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world." The funding authority for the program above is provided through legislation.

Purpose:

The intent of the authorizing legislation for the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship Program is to broaden the U.S. student population that participates in study abroad by focusing on those students who would not otherwise study outside the U.S. due to financial constraints. The Gilman Program provides scholarships to enable U.S. citizen undergraduate students of limited financial means to pursue credit-bearing academic studies or internships abroad. Such foreign study expands the understanding of other countries and cultures among U.S. students who may not otherwise be able to study or intern overseas, thereby better preparing these U.S. students to assume significant roles in an increasingly global economy and society.

The Gilman Program provides up to \$5,000 to eligible students to assist with the cost of up to one academic year of undergraduate study abroad. Supplements of up to \$3,000 are also provided for the study of critical-need languages (Arabic, Azerbaijani, Bangla, Chinese, Hindi, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Punjabi, Russian, Swahili, Turkish and Urdu).

ECA seeks to encourage participating students to choose non-traditional study abroad locations, including those that support the Presidential 100,000 Strong in the Americas and 1 Million Strong in China educational exchange initiatives; to study languages, especially critical languages; to engage in credit-bearing coursework from a broad range of disciplines that help internationalize student perspectives and address the pressing global challenges of our time such as climate change, food security, and public health; to consider career-oriented internships overseas; and to help under-represented U.S. institutions offer and promote study abroad opportunities for their students. These objectives should be addressed in proposals.

Since its inception in 2001, the Gilman Program has awarded more than 15,000 scholarships to U.S. undergraduate students representing over 1,000 colleges and universities from all 50 states (plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico) for study in over 130 countries around the world.

It is anticipated that ECA will provide a cooperative agreement of approximately \$12,500,000 for administration of the Gilman Program. ECA reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets and participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.

Guidelines:

The Gilman Program has three distinct application cycles: fall, spring and summer. The selected administering organization will be expected to conduct the following activities separately and/or collectively for each cycle as appropriate:

- Conduct a nationwide competition for participants with special emphasis on students from Minority-Serving Institutions and community colleges;
- Develop and oversee application and selection processes for participants;
- Disburse scholarship payments to students for overseas study;
- Develop and manage virtual pre-departure and re-entry modules for participants;
- Monitor program participants and provide assistance, as needed, during emergencies;
- Organize and host an annual National Review Panel meeting in Washington, DC;
- Evaluate the program;
- Support, monitor and oversee compulsory follow-on service projects;
- Provide regular reporting to ECA;
- Provide and oversee virtual and in-person alumni outreach and engagement activities.

Student Eligibility:

To apply for a scholarship, an applicant must:

- Be a citizen of the United States; Permanent residents of the United States are not eligible;
- Be an undergraduate student in good standing at an accredited institution of higher education in the United States (including both two-year and four-year institutions);
- Be a verified recipient of federal Pell Grant funding during the academic term of his/her application;
- Be in the process of applying to, or accepted for, a study abroad or internship program of at least two weeks for community college students and four weeks for students from four-year institutions, in a single country and eligible for credit from the student's home institution. Proof of program acceptance is required prior to award disbursement. ECA reserves the right to modify program duration requirements;
- Be proposing to study in a country not currently under a Travel Warning issued by the United States Department of State.

Recruitment, Application, and Selection:

The proposal must describe how the Gilman Program will be publicized to accredited U.S. institutions of higher education, relevant organizations and media outlets, including print and online media, to reach the widest possible audience of qualified applicants with emphasis on reaching a diverse range of institutions and programs within those institutions. The applicant organization should also describe its plan to respond to and manage a significant volume of queries and applications. The administering organization will also work closely with ECA to publicize the achievements of Gilman scholars. The applicant organization should provide information on successful media outreach campaigns it has conducted in the past. Please refer to Project Objectives Goals and Implementation (POGI) guidelines for additional guidance.

Other notes: **All materials and correspondence related to this program will state that the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship is a program of the U.S. Department of State supported in its implementation by (administering organization).** ECA will retain copyright use of and be allowed to distribute materials related to this program.

ECA requests that student applicants use an online application system. An alternate paper-based application should also be provided for candidates unable to apply online. These paper-based applications, however, must be entered into the online system by the administering organization program staff. All application materials should be available in a sortable, searchable, electronically accessible database format that can be easily shared with ECA upon request.

In ranking eligible applicants for scholarships, consideration should be given to academic excellence, financial need, diversity of the applicant pool, fields of study, proposed

destination, plans for language study, and type and location of home institution. Preference should be given to applicants with no previous study abroad experience.

Applicant organizations should propose a selection process that meets the criteria outlined above. ECA will approve the selection plan for candidates.

Fiscal Management and Disbursement of Funds:

At this time it is anticipated that approximately \$12,500,000 in funding will cover costs of all program components described above. Proposals should reflect a conscious effort to keep administrative costs low in order to maximize the amount of scholarships awarded. Proposals should also describe how the applicant organization plans to determine individual scholarship amounts, including supplemental Critical Need Languages (CNL) funding, and how funds will be disbursed to award recipients. Funding should be proportionate to the length and location of the program and must not exceed the amount requested by the applicant.

Virtual Pre-departure and Re-entry Modules

Applicant organizations should propose a mechanism for offering at least one pre-departure and one re-entry on-line module. Modules may be offered for optional academic credit. Modules should be designed to provide students with an overview of how individuals communicate and negotiate across cultures, with a focus on cross-cultural communication, adaptation (to include mental health), the role of citizen diplomats, reverse culture shock, deconstructing positive and negative experiences, and helping participants effectively articulate their study abroad experience to enhance their personal and professional development.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation

Applicant organizations should describe the systems they will use to help ensure the safety and security of Gilman Scholars abroad and to rapidly contact and communicate with them in cases of emergency. Proposals should also describe how the applicant organization will evaluate the program. Evaluation mechanisms should go beyond simply gathering anecdotal material and highlighting successful program participants following their return to the United States. Evaluation should also include detailed results and analysis of the compulsory follow-on service project. Each scholar must complete a compulsory follow-on service project within six months of their return to the U.S. Projects should take place either in the home institution or community of the scholar and include an opportunity for the scholar to promote study abroad and the Gilman Program.

Reporting:

Following the fall, spring, and summer selection panels, the administering organization will submit timely reports to ECA on the number of applicants, the number of participants selected, the names of the institutions of higher education in the United States that applicants and participants were attending at the time of application, the names of the institutions sponsoring the study programs abroad, the names and locations of the institutions of higher education outside the United States that participants will attend during their study program abroad, the award amounts for each participant, the fields and

academic periods of study that participants intend to study abroad. Because diversity is an important program goal, the administering organization should attempt to collect age, ethnicity, gender, and disability data from scholarship applicants and recipients, while respecting Federal guidelines on the solicitation of such information. The administering organization shall also provide program information and data to be included in the program's annual end-of-year report to Congress. Additionally ECA may request other periodic and ad hoc reports. These may include separate breakdowns for students studying in regions or countries of strategic interest, internship placements, and students studying critical languages.

Alumni Outreach and Engagement

We welcome proposals that include a number of in-person and virtual alumni activities, as outlined in the POGI, that provide alumni with leadership training and networking opportunities, and support recruiting future Gilman Scholars.

Organization and Implementation of a National Review Panel

Proposals should include a description of how the applicant organization plans to organize and implement a National Review Panel, as well as plans for hosting an annual National Review Panel meeting in Washington, D.C. The National Review Panel should be composed of higher education administration experts as well as private-sector leaders. The purpose of the panel is to conduct an annual review of the Gilman Program, its alignment with program goals, and to provide guidance and recommendations for future programming.

Summary

In a cooperative agreement, ECA/A/S/Q is substantially involved in program activities above and beyond routine monitoring. These activities and the roles and responsibilities of the Department and your organization are further outlined in the attached POGI.

B. Federal Award Information:

Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement. ECA's level of involvement in this program is listed under A. Program Description.

Fiscal Year Funds: 2016

Approximate Total Funding: \$12,500,000

Approximate Number of Awards: 1

Approximate Average Award: \$12,500,000

Floor of Award Range: None

Ceiling of Award Range: \$12,500,000

Anticipated Award Date: April 15, 2016

Anticipated Project Completion Date: October 30, 2017

Additional Information: Pending successful implementation of this program and the availability of funds, it is ECA's intent to renew this cooperative agreement for two additional consecutive fiscal years, before openly competing it again.

The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets and participant numbers in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds.

C.) Eligibility Information:

C.1. Eligible applicants: Applications may be submitted by U.S. public and private non-profit organizations meeting the provisions described in Internal Revenue Code section 26 USC 501(c)(3).

C.2. Cost Sharing or Matching Funds: There is no minimum or maximum percentage required for this competition. However, ECA encourages applicants to provide maximum levels of cost sharing and funding in support of its programs. When cost sharing is offered, it is understood and agreed that the applicant must provide the amount of cost sharing as stipulated in its proposal and later included in an approved agreement. Cost sharing may be in the form of allowable direct or indirect costs. For accountability, you must maintain written records to support all costs which are claimed as your contribution, as well as costs to be paid by the Federal government. Such records are subject to audit. The basis for determining the value of cash and in-kind contributions must be in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. In the event you do not provide the minimum amount of cost sharing as stipulated in the approved budget, ECA's contribution will be reduced in like proportion.

C.3. Other Eligibility Requirements:

a.) ECA grant guidelines require that organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges be limited to \$130,000 in Bureau funding. ECA anticipates making one award, in an amount \$12,500,000 to support program and administrative costs required to implement this program. Therefore, organizations with less than four years experience in conducting international exchanges are ineligible to apply under this competition.

b.) *Technical Eligibility:* All proposals must comply with the following: Eligible applicants may not submit more than one proposal in this competition. If more than one proposal is received from the same applicant, all submissions will be declared technically ineligible and will receive no further consideration in the review process. **Please note:** Applicant organizations are defined by their legal name, and EIN number as stated on their completed SF-424 and additional supporting documentation outlined in the Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document.

D.) Application and Submission Information:

Note: Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, ECA staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

D.1 Contact Information to Request an Application Package:

Please contact Jacqueline Mourot, U.S. Study Abroad Branch, ECA/A/S/Q, SA-5, 4th Floor, U.S. Department of State, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20037, tel. 202-632-9463 and fax 202-632-9479, MourotJD@state.gov to request a Solicitation Package.

The Solicitation Package contains the Proposal Submission Instruction (PSI) document which consists of required application forms, and standard guidelines for proposal preparation.

It also contains the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document, which provides specific information, award criteria and budget instructions tailored to this competition.

Please specify Jacqueline Mourot and refer to the Funding Opportunity Number located at the top of this announcement on all other inquiries and correspondence.

D.2. To Download a Solicitation Package Via Internet:

The entire Solicitation Package may be downloaded from the Bureau's website at <http://eca.state.gov/organizational-funding> or from the Grants.gov website at <http://www.grants.gov>.

Please read all information before downloading.

D.2a. Content and Form of Submission: Applicants must follow all instructions in the Solicitation Package. The application should be submitted per the instructions under

D.3p. "Application Deadline and Method of Submission" section below.

D.3a. You are required to have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number to apply for a grant or cooperative agreement from the U.S. Government. This number is a nine-digit identification number, which uniquely identifies business entities. Obtaining a UEI number is easy and there is no charge. To obtain a UEI number, access <http://www.dnb.com> or call 1-866-705-5711. Please ensure that your UEI (DUNS) number is included in the appropriate box of the SF – 424 which is part of the formal application package.

D.3b. All proposals must contain an executive summary, proposal narrative and budget.

Please Refer to the Solicitation Package. It contains the mandatory Proposal Submission Instructions (PSI) document and the Project Objectives, Goals and Implementation (POGI) document for additional formatting and technical requirements.

D.3c. All federal award applicants must be registered in the System for Award Management (SAM) database in order to submit a proposal in response to an open competition on Grants.gov.

All federal award recipients must maintain current registrations in the SAM database. Recipients must maintain accurate and up-to-date information in www.SAM.gov until all program and financial activity and reporting have been completed. Recipients must review and update the information at least annually after the initial registration and more frequently if required information changes or another award is granted. Failure to register in SAM will render applicants ineligible to receive funding.

D.3d. You must have nonprofit status with the IRS at the time of application. **Please note:** Effective January 7, 2009, all applicants for ECA federal assistance awards must include in their application the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees, regardless of amount of compensation). In fulfilling this requirement, applicants must submit information in one of the following ways:

- 1) Those who file Internal Revenue Service Form 990, "Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax," must include a copy of relevant portions of this form.
- 2) Those who do not file IRS Form 990 must submit information above in the format of their choice.

D.3e. In addition to final program reporting requirements, award recipients will also be required to submit a one-page document, derived from their program reports, listing and describing their grant activities. For award recipients, the names of directors and/or senior executives (current officers, trustees, and key employees), as well as the one-page description of grant activities, will be transmitted by the State Department to OMB, along with other information required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), and will be made available to the public by the Office of Management and Budget on its USASpending.gov website as part of ECA's FFATA reporting requirements.

D.3f. If your organization is a private nonprofit which has not received a grant or cooperative agreement from ECA in the past three years, or if your organization received nonprofit status from the IRS within the past four years, you must submit the necessary documentation to verify nonprofit status as directed in the PSI document. Failure to do so will cause your proposal to be declared technically ineligible.

D.3g. **All ECA awards recipient organizations** must be registered with GrantSolutions by accessing www.GrantSolutions.gov. To register as a first time user of GrantSolutions, please scroll to the bottom of the home page and click "Getting Started-Request a User Account" at <http://home.grantsolutions.gov/home/home/customer-support/getting-started/>. Organizations that have previously used GrantSolutions do not need to register again. If the organization is not able to access the system, please contact GrantSolutions.gov Help Desk for help in gaining access.

Support for Grantee Organizations is available from 8 AM – 6 PM EST, Monday – Friday and can be reached at help@grantsolutions.gov or 1-866-577-0771.

Please take into consideration the following information when preparing your proposal narrative:

FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY

D.3h. ADHERENCE TO ALL REGULATIONS GOVERNING THE J VISA

The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs places critically important emphases on the security and proper administration of the Exchange Visitor (J visa) Programs and adherence by award recipients and sponsors to all regulations governing the J visa. A copy of the complete regulations governing the administration of Exchange Visitor (J) programs is available at <http://j1visa.state.gov> or from:

Office of Designation, Private Sector Programs Division
U.S. Department of State
SA-44, Suite 668
301 4th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20547

Please refer to Solicitation Package for further information.

D.3i. Diversity, Freedom and Democracy Guidelines

Pursuant to the Bureau's authorizing legislation, programs must maintain a non-political character and should be balanced and representative of the diversity of political, social and cultural life in the United States and abroad. "Diversity" should be interpreted in the broadest sense and encompass differences including race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, geographic location, socio-economic status, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will enhance the program's goals and objectives and the participants' exchange experience. Please refer to the review criteria under the 'Support of Diversity' section of this document as well as the DIVERSITY, FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY section in the "Proposal Submission Instructions" document for specific suggestions on incorporating diversity into the total proposal.

Public Law 104-319 provides that "in carrying out programs of educational and cultural exchange in countries whose people do not fully enjoy freedom and democracy," the Bureau "shall take appropriate steps to provide opportunities for participation in such programs to human rights and democracy leaders of such countries." Public Law 106 - 113 requires that the governments of the countries described above do not have inappropriate influence in the selection process. Proposals should reflect advancement of these goals in their program contents, to the full extent deemed feasible.

D.3j. **Program Monitoring and Evaluation**

Proposals must include a plan to monitor and evaluate the project's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. The Bureau recommends that your proposal include a draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus a description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives. The Bureau expects that the recipient organization will track participants or partners and be able to respond to key evaluation questions, including satisfaction with the program, learning as a result of the program, changes in behavior as a result of the program, and effects of the program on institutions (institutions in which participants work or partner institutions). The evaluation plan should include indicators that measure gains in mutual understanding as well as substantive knowledge.

Successful monitoring and evaluation depend heavily on setting clear goals and outcomes at the outset of a program. Your evaluation plan should include a description of your project's objectives, your anticipated project outcomes, and how and when you intend to measure these outcomes (performance indicators). The more that outcomes are "smart" (specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and placed in a reasonable time frame), the easier it will be to conduct the evaluation. You should also show how your project objectives link to the goals of the program described in this NOFO.

Your monitoring and evaluation plan should clearly distinguish between program outputs and outcomes. Outputs are products and services delivered, often stated as an amount. Output information is important to show the scope or size of project activities, but it cannot substitute for information about progress towards outcomes or the results achieved. Examples of outputs include the number of people trained or the number of seminars conducted. Outcomes, in contrast, represent specific results a project is intended to achieve and is usually measured as an extent of change. Findings on outputs and outcomes should both be reported, but the focus should be on outcomes.

We encourage you to assess the following four levels of outcomes, as they relate to the program goals set out in the NOFO (listed here in increasing order of importance):

1. **Participant satisfaction** with the program and exchange experience.
2. **Participant learning**, such as increased knowledge, aptitude, skills, and changed understanding and attitude. Learning includes both substantive (subject-specific) learning and mutual understanding.
3. **Participant behavior**, concrete actions to apply knowledge in work or community; greater participation and responsibility in civic organizations; interpretation and explanation of experiences and new knowledge gained; continued contacts between participants, community members, and others.
4. **Institutional changes**, such as increased collaboration and partnerships, policy reforms, new programming, and organizational improvements.

Please note: Consideration should be given to the appropriate timing of data collection for each level of outcome. For example, satisfaction is usually captured as a short-term

outcome, whereas behavior and institutional changes are normally considered longer-term outcomes.

Overall, the quality of your monitoring and evaluation plan will be judged on how well it 1) specifies intended outcomes; 2) gives clear descriptions of how each outcome will be measured; 3) identifies when particular outcomes will be measured; and 4) provides a clear description of the data collection strategies for each outcome (i.e., surveys, interviews, or focus groups). (Please note that evaluation plans that deal only with the first level of outcomes [satisfaction] will be deemed less competitive under the present evaluation criteria.)

Recipient organizations will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

D.3k. Virtual Exchange Component: ECA welcomes innovative ideas on how organizations can leverage appropriate mobile and/or online technologies to maintain engagement among exchange participants, encourage project collaboration and widen participation in the overall project to a broader audience. ECA strongly encourages organizations submitting proposals in response to this solicitation to suggest one or more virtual exchange components to complement the in-person exchange. The virtual exchange component(s) could come before, during and/or after the physical exchange. The objective for the virtual exchange component(s), defined as technology-enabled, sustainable, people-to-people, cross-cultural exchanges, is to augment the impact of the in-person exchange described in this solicitation. ECA encourages organizations to propose virtual exchange ideas that take advantage of ECA's existing web and social networking platforms, including our [International Exchange Alumni](#) space. Virtual exchange components would be coordinated with and approved by the ECA program office and U.S. missions abroad on a project by project basis.

D.3l. Communications Guidance for ECA Grant Recipients: All ECA Grant Recipients must adhere to the requirements in [ECA's Communications Guidance](#) on the creation of program branding and attribution, websites, social media, and press.

D.3m. Please take the following information into consideration when preparing your budget:

D.3n. Applicants must submit SF-424A – “Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs” along with a comprehensive budget for the entire program. There must be a summary budget as well as breakdowns reflecting both administrative and program budgets. Applicants may provide separate sub-budgets for each program component, phase, location, or activity to provide clarification. *Applicants should budget the maximum possible amount for scholarship awards and keep administrative and overhead costs to an absolute minimum.*

D.3o. Allowable costs for the program include the following:

1) **Administrative:** Salaries and benefits and other direct administrative expenses such as postage, phone, printing and office supplies.

2) **Program:** Participant expenses, which may include institutional fees, travel expenses, tuition; expenses related to review panels, including travel and per diem.

Please refer to the Solicitation Package for complete budget guidelines and formatting instructions.

D.3p. Application Deadline and Method of Submission:

Application Deadline Date: Monday, March 14, 2016

Method of Submission:

Applications may only be submitted electronically through Grants.gov

(<http://www.grants.gov>). Complete solicitation packages are available at Grants.gov in the "Find" portion of the system.

PLEASE NOTE: ECA bears no responsibility for applicant timeliness of submission or data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes for proposals submitted via Grants.gov.

Please follow the instructions available in the 'Get Started' portion of the site (<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>).

Several of the steps in the Grants.gov registration process could take several weeks. Therefore, applicants should check with appropriate staff within their organizations immediately after reviewing this NOFO to confirm or determine their registration status with Grants.gov.

Once registered, the amount of time it can take to upload an application will vary depending on a variety of factors including the size of the application and the speed of your internet connection. In addition, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days.

Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov.

The Grants.gov website includes extensive information on all phases/aspects of the Grants.gov process, including an extensive section on frequently asked questions, located under the "For Applicants" section of the website. ECA strongly recommends that all potential applicants review thoroughly the Grants.gov website, well in advance of submitting a proposal through the Grants.gov system.

Direct all questions regarding Grants.gov registration and submission to:

Grants.gov Customer Support

Contact Center Phone: 800 -518-4726

Business Hours: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; closed on federal holidays

Email: support@grants.gov

Applicants have until midnight (12:00 a.m.), Washington, DC time of the closing date to ensure that their entire application has been uploaded to the Grants.gov site. There are no exceptions to the above deadline. Applications uploaded to the site after midnight of the application deadline date will be automatically rejected by the Grants.gov system, and will be technically ineligible.

Please refer to the Grants.gov website, for definitions of various "application statuses" and the difference between a submission receipt and a submission validation. Applicants will receive a validation e-mail from Grants.gov upon the successful submission of an application. Again, validation of an electronic submission via Grants.gov can take up to two business days. Therefore, we strongly recommend that you not wait until the application deadline to begin the submission process through Grants.gov. ECA will not notify you upon receipt of electronic applications.

It is the responsibility of all applicants submitting proposals via the Grants.gov web portal to ensure that proposals have been received by Grants.gov in their entirety, and ECA bears no responsibility for data errors resulting from transmission or conversion processes.

D.3q. Intergovernmental Review of Applications: Executive Order 12372 does not apply to this program.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

The Bureau will review all proposals for technical eligibility. Proposals will be deemed ineligible if they do not fully adhere to the guidelines stated herein and in the Solicitation Package. All eligible proposals will be reviewed by the program office, as well as the Public Diplomacy section overseas and State Department regional bureaus, where appropriate. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance with Federal and Bureau regulations and guidelines and forwarded to Bureau grant panels for advisory review. Proposals may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. All awards will be assessed for risk prior to their issuance. Final funding decisions are at the discretion of the Department of State's Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Bureau's Grants Officer.

E.1. REVIEW CRITERIA

Technically eligible applications will be competitively reviewed according to the criteria stated below. These criteria are not rank ordered and all carry equal weight in the proposal evaluation:

- 1. Quality of the program idea:** Proposals should exhibit originality, substance, precision, and relevance to the Bureau's mission.
- 2. Program planning and ability to achieve program objectives:** Detailed agenda and relevant work plan should demonstrate substantive undertakings and logistical capacity. The agenda and plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above. Objectives should be reasonable, feasible, and flexible. Proposals should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan.
- 3. Multiplier effect/impact and Follow-on Activities:** Proposed programs should strengthen long-term mutual understanding, including maximum sharing of information and establishment of long-term institutional and individual linkages. Proposals should provide a plan for continued follow-on activity (without Bureau support) ensuring that Bureau supported programs are not isolated events.
- 4. Support of Diversity:** Proposals should show substantive support of ECA's policy on diversity. Proposals should demonstrate how diversity will be achieved in the different aspects of program administration and of program design, content and implementation, including individual grantee/participant recruitment, selection and placement. It is important that proposals have a clearly articulated diversity plan and not simply express general support for the concept of diversity.
- 5. Institutional Capacity and Institution's Record/Ability:** Proposed personnel and institutional resources should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program or project's goals. Proposals should demonstrate an institutional record of successful exchange programs, including responsible fiscal management and full compliance with all reporting requirements for past Bureau awards (grants or cooperative agreements) as determined by Bureau Grants Staff. The Bureau will consider the past performance of prior recipients and the demonstrated potential of new applicants.
- 6. Project Evaluation:** Proposals should include a plan to evaluate the program's success, both as the activities unfold and at the end of the program. A draft survey questionnaire or other technique plus description of a methodology to use to link outcomes to original project objectives is recommended.
- 7. Cost-effectiveness and Cost-sharing:** The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and honoraria, should be kept as low as possible. All other items should be necessary and appropriate. Proposals should maximize cost-sharing through other private sector support as well as institutional direct funding contributions.

F.) Federal Award Administration Information

F.1. Award Notices:

Final awards cannot be made until funds have been appropriated by Congress, allocated and committed through internal Bureau procedures. Successful applicants will receive a

Federal Assistance Award (FAA) from the Bureau's Grants Office. The FAA and the original proposal with subsequent modifications (if applicable) shall be the only binding authorizing document between the recipient and the U.S. Government. The FAA will be signed by an authorized Grants Officer, and transmitted to the recipient's responsible officer identified in the application.

Unsuccessful applicants will receive notification of the results of the application review from the ECA program office coordinating this competition.

F.2 Administrative and National Policy Requirements:

Terms and Conditions for the Administration of ECA agreements include the following: Office of Management and Budget's Circular 2 CFR Parts 200 and 600, entitled the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Effective December 26, 2014, replacing the previous circulars).

For a copy of the OMB circular cited, please contact the U.S. Government Publishing Office or download from the www.ecfr.gov website.

Please reference the following websites for additional information:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants>.

<https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/pages/home.aspx>

F.3. Reporting Requirements:

You must provide ECA with an electronic copy of the following required reports:

Mandatory:

- 1.) Additional performance reports shall not be required more frequently than quarterly or, less frequently than annually. Annual reports shall be due 90 calendar days after the grant year; quarterly or semi-annual reports shall be due 30 days after the reporting period. (Frequency of these reports will be determined by the Grants Officer and Program Officer). A SF-PPR, "Performance Progress Report" Cover Sheet must be submitted with all programmatic reports and can be found here: http://aopefa.a.state.gov/content.asp?content_id=20&menu_id=68. The complete report and supporting documentation must be uploaded by the Recipient as a *Grant Note* under the corresponding record for this Agreement in GrantSolutions.gov. For assistance, please contact the GrantSolutions Help Desk at 1 (866) 577-0771 (toll free for US callers) or by email at help@grantsolutions.gov. The Federal Financial Report (FFR SF-425/SF-425a) must be submitted through the Payment Management System (PMS). The electronic version of the FFR can be accessed at: <http://www.dpm.psc.gov/>. Once a financial report has been approved by the Department, the Recipient must upload the approved report to [GrantSolutions.gov](http://Grantsolutions.gov), in the same manner specified for the programmatic

reports. Failure to comply with these reporting requirements may jeopardize the Recipient's eligibility for future Agreements.

- 2.) A final program and financial report no more than 90 days after the expiration or termination of the award;
- 3.) A concise, one-page final program report summarizing program outcomes no more than 90 days after the expiration of the award. This report should be e-mailed to: FFATAECA@state.gov. This one-page report will be transmitted to OMB, and be made available to the public via OMB's USAspending.gov website - as part of ECA's Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) reporting requirements.

Award recipients will be required to provide reports analyzing their evaluation findings to the Bureau in their regular program reports. (Please refer to D. Application and Submission Instructions above for Program Monitoring and Evaluation information)

All data collected, including survey responses and contact information, must be maintained for a minimum of three years and provided to the Bureau upon request.

F.4. Optional Program Data Requirements:

Award recipients will be required to maintain specific data on program participants and activities in an electronically accessible database format that can be shared with the Bureau as required. At a minimum, the data must include the following:

- 1) Name, address, contact information and biographic sketch of all persons who travel internationally on funds provided by the agreement or who benefit from the award funding but do not travel.
- 2) A listing of all proposed and completed follow-on service projects submitted by program participants. Project descriptions should also be included.
- 3) Photographs submitted by program participants highlighting their experiences while abroad or upon return during the execution of their follow-on service projects.

G. Agency Contacts

For questions about this announcement, contact: **Jacqueline Mourot**, U.S. Department of State, ECA/A/S/Q, SA-5, 4th Floor, 2200 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037, tel. 202-632-9463 and fax 202-632-9479, MourotJD@state.gov.

All correspondence with the Bureau concerning this NOFO should reference the title and funding opportunity number listed at the top of this solicitation.

Please read the complete announcement before sending inquiries or submitting proposals. Once the NOFO deadline has passed, Bureau staff may not discuss this competition with applicants until the proposal review process has been completed.

H. Other Information:**Notice:**

The terms and conditions published in this NOFO are binding and may not be modified by any Bureau representative. Explanatory information provided by the Bureau that contradicts published language will not be binding. Issuance of the NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the Government. The Bureau reserves the right to reduce, revise, or increase proposal budgets in accordance with the needs of the program and the availability of funds. Awards made will be subject to periodic reporting and evaluation requirements per section F3. Reporting Requirements above.

_____	_____
Evan Ryan	Date
Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs	
U.S. Department of State	

